

City of Kalamazoo  
PLANNING COMMISSION  
Minutes  
November 1, 2018  
*FINAL*

Second Floor, City Hall  
Commission Chambers  
241W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Members Present: Rachel Hughes-Nilsson, Chair; Gregory Milliken, Vice Chair; Jack Baartman; Alfonso Espinosa; Charley Coss; Sakhi Vyas

Members Excused: Emily Greenman Wright; Derek Wissner; James Pitts

City Staff: Rebekah Kik, Director of CPED; Christina Anderson, City Planner; Robert Bauckham, Senior Development Planner; Katie Reilly, Neighborhood Activator and Beth Cheeseman, Code Administration Clerk/Cashier

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Hughes-Nilsson called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

**B. ROLL CALL**

Planner Anderson proceeded with roll call and determined that the aforementioned members were present.

**C. ADOPTION OF FORMAL AGENDA**

**Commissioner Coss, supported by Commissioner Vyas, moved approval of the November 1, 2018 Planning Commission agenda. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Commissioner Baartman, supported by Commissioner Espinosa, moved approval of the August 21, 2018 Planning Commission minutes as corrected. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**Commissioner Espinosa, supported by Commissioner Vyas, moved approval of the October 4, 2018 Planning Commission minutes. With a voice vote, the motion carried unanimously.**

**E. COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None

## **F. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

None

## **H. NEW BUSINESS**

### **P.C. #2018.21: Presentation on Complete Streets Policy and Crosswalk Ordinance**

Director Kik came forward and shared a background of the policy – saying they paused the project to wait for results of an MDOT Planning and Environmental Linkages study on E. Michigan, Kalamazoo, Park & Westnedge. As the study was in progress, MDOT told the City they would not change one-way streets back to two-way traffic. Because this was a request of the community, the City asked MDOT for options. MDOT suggested that the City could take the streets back. Since then the City has been working closely with MDOT to get jurisdictional transfer of the streets back to City possession, after which the City can plan, design and engineer the streets the way the community has requested. She said it is the City Commission which needs to accept the streets back because it is a big financial commitment. Per MDOT, streets must be free and clear of issues to be transferred back to the City. Instead of waiting for MDOT to repair the streets to their standard, the City asked them to write a check and the City will repair the streets per the Complete Streets policy. The City and MDOT drove every street and created a budget of approximately \$11,689,000. Director Kik indicated the City are hoping to create an endowment for the streets. She said they know it will take a few years to get streets planned correctly and prepare the federal application to get two-way traffic. Director Kik said they held meetings with a local advisory group and went to KATS Technical Committee and shared the news with them. She also spoke of upcoming public meetings and presentations to the City Commission.

Director Kik said the Complete Streets policy's #1 goal is the transportation framework detailed in the 2025 Master Plan. She said they are focusing on access to all destinations – including non-motorized access. In the creation of the framework, Director Kik said they drove around to make sure land uses and streets were the right size and compatible. The City came up with a hierarchy of streets and what those streets should do in their context and thought about what forms would be safest for non-motorized transportation. The Complete Streets Committee's vision was for a connected network of safe streets that provides convenient access to all parts of the city. Director Kik said this vision was created to align with the community's desire. The policy includes a checklist – non-motorized transportation, sidewalk width, environmental responsibility. To make sure the policy is balanced, they have an Advisory Committee consisting of Planning Commissioners, residents, advocates, and Complete Streets Coalition members. They have written into the policy a minimum of two meetings for each project. This allows appropriate outreach efforts to make sure everyone is still on the same page.

Director Kik said they felt strongly about including a crosswalk ordinance. She reported this ordinance is really important for stressing access to all users and making sure the infrastructure they are putting down is enforceable. She believes the crosswalk ordinance will help give pedestrians more control in the right of way and will enhance their safety.

Commissioner Hughes Nilsson asked if the upcoming meetings are advertised on the webpage. Planner Anderson responded that they are on the Imagine Kalamazoo website and Facebook page and the City's Facebook page. She said there will be a meeting on Tuesday, November 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm in Chambers, and Wednesday, November 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm at Metro transit. The meeting will highlight the progression of these issues from Imagine Kalamazoo to the Master Plan. They are open meetings for anyone to attend.

Commissioner Baartman asked why one-way roads are not preferred. Director Kik said studies completed around housing market analysis, retail analysis and academic development, find that one-way streets are confusing for visitors, beginning drivers, and aging drivers. She said the confusion in circulation repels people – if it is not easy, then people are less likely to continue to try. Director Kik pointed out that two-way roads would ease emergency response issues. It may also help traffic flow when the train passes through.

Commissioner Vyas stated that there are changes coming to the bus schedule coming. She wondered if that was being taken into account and how the plans would intersect. Director Kik stated that since they are in the planning stage, there is time and opportunity to look at what they are doing. She said she has already had conversations with Director McBride about Stadium, Lovell, Riverview, Burdick Street for express-like bus lanes.

Commissioner Coss referenced some potential construction projects and asked how far down the road are they looking in terms of vision. Director Kik responded that anytime you talk about traffic and transportation needs, you look out as far as possible. She believes that this policy will assist in attracting developers.

Commissioner Milliken thanked Director Kik for the presentation. He said that is important information to share. He stated that it is great to see the Master Plan being implemented. Commissioner Milliken wondered what the threshold is for qualifying as a Complete Streets project. Director Kik gave an example of a mill and fill. She said it is a matter of looking at the project through a Complete Streets lens. Commissioner Milliken asked how it applies to private development. Director Kik said they use the Strategic Vision to guide development and help developers understand where the community stands. They would let the developers know of the overarching values of a Connected City and walkability. Director Kik referenced a project – Lot 9 – where they asked them to build a pedestrian pathway to connect Water Street directly to Michigan. They will work with developers to connect the pedestrian network and make sure space is left for bike lanes.

Commissioner Espinosa asked for more clarification of what that means for current development. Director Kik said that if a new building doesn't have a sidewalk, they would work with developer to make sure they build a sidewalk and make it the right width, or make sure a curb is in the right place so bike lanes fit. It might be a matter of thinking about what they are near and considering the context – are they near a generator of walkability and thinking about how they can improve that. Commissioner Espinosa asked if there is there a map of walkability. Director Kik said there is and they know where all the missing sidewalks are. Director Kik shared that they have a pedestrian network study being piloted

Downtown. This study involves walking all Downtown sidewalks - documenting trip hazards, bad patches of asphalt, paving bricks disintegrating, trees dying, lighting, way finding, signage, and the condition of street furniture. The results will be plotted in GIS. When it is plotted, we can pull up certain issues and get bid prices.

### **2025 Master Plan: Year 1 in Review**

Planner Anderson came forward to present an annual review of the Master Plan. She said that many communities fall into the curve of complacency, but the City is striving to be on the curve of transformation as it relates to Master Plan implementation. Planner Anderson emphasized that Imagine Kalamazoo and the Master Plan has changed the City's Standard Operating Procedures – with every department in the City using it for direction. She also said the Master Plan is not a static document, if something needs to be changed, they will go through the process to change it. Using this document ensures there is alignment in how the City moves forward.

#### Complete Street Policy

Public Services, along with Planning staff, are working on an Access Management Plan. Planner Anderson stated they are working with KATS on what the City would like to see funded for the Transportation Plan. The City is working with MDOT on the Jurisdictional transfer of streets, a parking management plan is in the works, and focus groups are meeting this month.

#### Metro Transit

They recently completed a review of bus stops and routes. That will relate to how the Planning Department thinks about where development goes.

#### Complete Neighborhoods

In the process of finalizing this study of Kalamazoo's neighborhoods using the criteria in the Master Plan. A historic building survey is still planned to move forward, and they are working with outside partnerships. Kalamazoo was selected by State Historic Preservation Organization to host a state-wide historic district training in March.

#### Neighborhood Plans

Three Neighborhood Plans are done – one has been approved through the City Commission and two are planned to go before them on December 3. Three more plans are actively in the works – Edison, Oakwood and Oakwood/Winchell. The Planning Division has participated in meetings across the City, and the Public Participation Plan has been implemented. Neighborhoods are reorganizing/organizing to move forward. Planner Anderson reported that they have some small dollar amounts to move some projects forward. She also stated that they are using the information from Neighborhood Plans to inform budgets and other projects.

#### Partnerships

Planner Anderson said they are using partners and gave the example of WMU. The Eastside Neighborhood wrote into their Neighborhood Plan a desire for more food access and food security. Planner Anderson said a WMU nutrition course has partnered with them and are doing a study to understand what food access there is and how it is being accessed across the age groups.

#### Processes

Planner Anderson reported they are in the process of revamping the Abandoned Residential Structures ordinance. She said it will be called Vacant Blighted Structures and will cover all structures in City, not just residential.

#### Affordable Housing

Planner Anderson said they are constantly thinking about affordable housing strategies. She reported the Planning Commission and the Planning Department can think about what zoning changes will support affordable housing projects in the future.

#### Economic Vitality

Planner Anderson stated that a Parking Management Strategy is underway. When they look at what factors are holding retail back in downtown, parking is seen as a problem. She also talked about the creation of the Northside Cultural Business District Authority which works with corridor improvement. Planner Anderson said the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA) is going through a site prioritization process, and the Business Development Fund (formerly Economic Opportunity Fund) is looking at how to use City funds to do façade improvements.

#### Review City Development Processes

A new Site Plan review process has been implemented and the Development Administrative Policy is being updated. Planner Anderson said they are working with the system, Dynometrics, and there is a new Data Manager in the City.

#### Inviting Public Areas

In order to create inviting public places, the Complete Streets policy is underway and the Parks Department is finishing their Master Plan right now. They are also working with partners such as the Kalamazoo Nature Center.

#### Environmental Responsibility

The Climate Action Plan is in progress. A new staff member is coming on board who will be the Projects Development Coordinator with a focus and background in sustainability. Planner Anderson stated that person will help with the Climate Action Plan. That person has knowledge that will impact the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and Plan, and h/she will partner with other environmental people in the City, and help with the Natural Features Protection Policy.

#### Site Plan Review and Environmental Responsibility

Documents have been updated to make sure they are asking for and reviewing the right information regarding storm water and environmental issues.

### Safe Communities

Planner Anderson said they are using HUD CDBG funds to help improve our code enforcement in the City. She said they will partner with the WMU Social Work department to think about all of the issues going on and how they can best help people.

### Anti-Blight Strategy

Planner Anderson said this has been drafted and is going to City Commission for review. She said they are thinking of how they can use their dollars to help residents to improve/winterize their homes. Planner Anderson reported they are doing a targeted focus area in the Northside to think about how they can partner and re-invest in an area that hasn't seen investment in a while.

### Shared Prosperity Plan

The Community Investment Division is working to develop a resident leadership platform in core neighborhoods, and a partnership with the Western Walker Institute. They were awarded the Light Grant, which is \$1 million dollars. Part of the grant will be spent on how to understand, collect, process and use data to better inform government systems. The rest will be spent on investigating best practices in other communities.

### Youth Development

The City is working to expand summer programming through Parks & Recreation. Neighborhood plans are including how to involve youth in their communities - including the possibility of adding youth positions to neighborhood boards.

Planner Anderson stated that the Planning Division's next step will next be to check in with other departments, asking about their progress and if they need help.

### **Zoning Ordinance Update**

Planner Anderson stated that the Planning Commission has reviewed and approved three new zoning districts recommended to the City commission and an update of the parking and loading standards. She said that on Monday, November 19, those will go before the City Commission for a first reading and then an approval to go forward for a public hearing and a vote.

Planner Anderson outlined the possible order of the upcoming zoning updates. She said she will proceed with rewriting the residential districts, doing the public hearings, and remapping districts, but knows it will take a few months. In the meantime, she is asking Commissioners to make changes to existing residential tables in Appendix A to help with lots in city now that are non-conforming because of lot widths or lot areas don't match what is on the ground. She believes this will reduce the number of variance requests.

### Quarter 1/2

Planner Anderson stated they will be working on residential zoning first because housing is such a critical issue in Kalamazoo. They will look at how the Downtown District interfaces with the Downtown Design Review Guidelines and if both are needed. They will also review sign ordinances.

Quarter 2/3

They will update administrative processes – site plan process, special use and all other processes outlined in the zoning code.

Quarter 2/4

They will go through the zoning ordinances involving commercial, industrial, and other districts.

Quarter 3/4

Landscaping and Lighting ordinances will be addressed.

Other things to be updated include: Definitions, non-conforming language, and zoning boilerplates. These changes will require outreach and conversations.

Commissioner Milliken asked if the new residential district piece and updated mappings will apply City wide or just apply to the neighborhoods that have done Neighborhood Plans. Planner Anderson said they will likely work in order of neighborhoods with plans, but mapping will require neighborhood meetings, outreach and discussions. She said that in some cases they will have to update the map before every Neighborhood Plan is done.

Commissioner Milliken stated that this is impressive and it is amazing all of the work done this past year. He stated that sometimes a connection is not made to Imagine Kalamazoo and the Master Plan. Commissioner Milliken encouraged City staff to help people very directly to connect the dots from Imagine Kalamazoo to Master Plan to projects people see. Planner Anderson agreed saying they do have an online Imagine Kalamazoo projects page where major projects are posted. She said they are trying to get information out with presentations and staff reports.

Commissioner Coss asked if outreach has been standardized - providing a check and balance. Planner Anderson stated that for right now that happens with every project, for example, the Complete Streets Policy requires two meetings per project. She said that in Jan, Feb, and March, the Planning Division and Public Services will go out to Neighborhood Meetings and give information about street projects and how it will impact the neighborhood. Planner Anderson said they went to Neighborhood Meetings this spring and talked with them about projects in the design phase. She said six months later they go back to them with finished design and the bid.

Commissioner Coss also asked if they are talking about work groups or a schedule for the Commissioners. He commented that subcommittees might be helpful for working with deadlines and putting people together accordingly. Planner Anderson responded that a strategic calendar for the Planning Commission will be important.

**I. CITIZENS' COMMENTS (Regarding non-agenda items)**

None

**J. CITY COMMISSION LIAISON COMMENTS**

Commissioner Jack Urban stated that the questions and comments Commissioners made were right on and he seconded them. He thanked Commissioners for paying attention to the very content-rich presentation.

**K. CITY PLANNER'S REPORT**

Planner Bauckham presented an overview of site plans currently in process. He said there are 54 projects for the year which is above their goal. He also shared there were 16 projects in the month of October – which is a record for a one month period for the program.

He also reviewed the progress on the following projects:

- Enterprise Leasing – will go into the former Wayside West building. There are plans to totally re-skin that building and add landscaping on the site.
- Schupan aluminum on Covington road - adding three additions to building
- Friendship Village – adding a pool building
- United Building – adding an addition on west side
- Bronson Lab Building - addition under review
- The Exchange Building – working on 15<sup>th</sup> floor, beginning to skin the outside of the building, preparing for winter to work inside and finish next year.
- New Mixed-Use Building on Rose & Lovell – foundation going in
- Mixed-Use Building Lot 9 – under construction
- Parkway Flats – started the last building there
- Bronson Hospitality House – nearing completion
- Midtown Market Place – finished up on the eastside of the property, poured a sidewalk and will finish landscaping and close out the project.

Planner Bauckham said at the December 6 meeting there will be a couple special use permit requests for transitional residential uses. He said they will also have the CIP for 2019 for them to review and hopefully recommend approval to the City Commission. Then they will have the text amendments to the residential portions of the zoning ordinance.

**L. MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS BY PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Coss, seconded by Commissioner Vyas, thanked Planner Anderson for an incredible presentation.

**M. ADJOURNMENT**

**Commissioner Espinosa, supported by Commissioner Coss, moved to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:49pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid blue horizontal line.

Christina Anderson,  
City Planner  
Community Planning & Development